Panama · Pacific Exposition Day

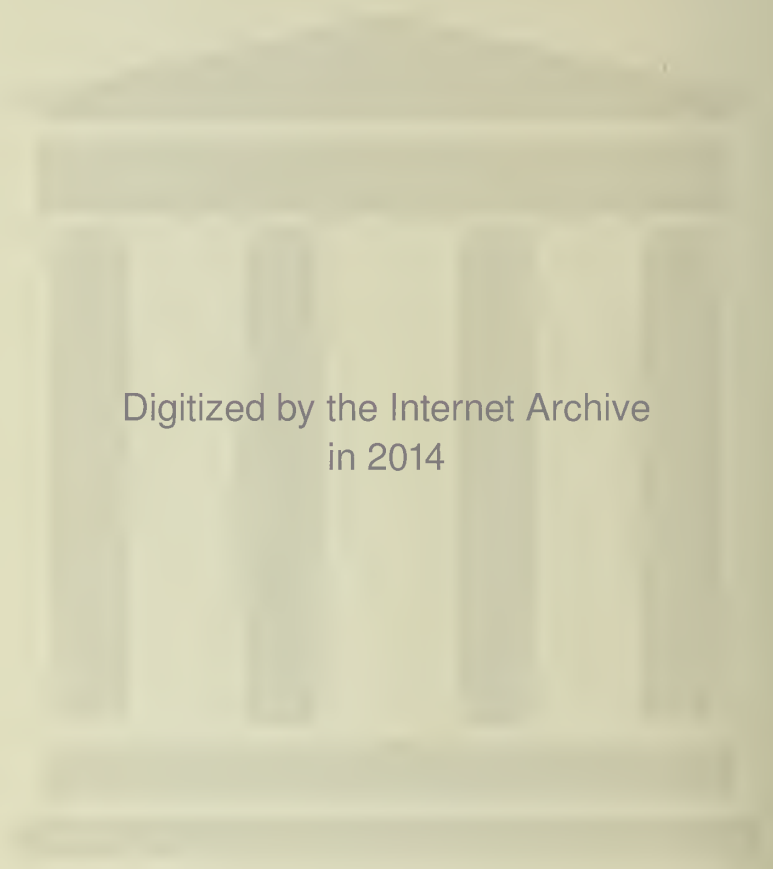
in honor of the National · Educational Association

Palace Hotel St. Francis Hotel

July the twelfth, nineteen-eleven

California welcomes the world to the exposition city—San Francisco

1915



PANAMA-PACIFIC EXPOSITION DAY

RECEPTION

TENDERED TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE
NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.
SAN FRANCISCO
WEDNESDAY, JULY TWELVE
NINETEEN-ELEVEN

ST. FRANCIS PALACE

Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company

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San Francisco

Serene, indifferent of Fate,
Thou siftest at the Western Gate;

Upon thy height, so lately won,
Still slant the banners of the sun;

Thou seest the white seas strike their tents,
O Warder of two continents!

And, scornful of the peace that flies
Thy angry winds and sullen skies,

Thou drawest all things, small or great,
To thee beside the Western Gate.

Bret Harte

THE CANAL AND THE EXPOSITION

BY

RUDOLPH J. TAUSSIG

[*A paper read at a meeting of the Chit Chat Club, San Francisco, June 12, 1911*]

THE water highway westward from Europe which Columbus set out to find over four hundred years ago, but could not because it did not exist, is about to become a reality by the skill, ingenuity and labor of man. The completion of the Panama Canal will afford the passage by ship from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and on to Asia. For all practical purposes the surmise of the fifteenth century will become true that the ocean to the west of Europe and to the east of Asia is the same body of water—the introduction of the continents of North and South America being merely an incident en route.

Columbus died in the belief that he had reached the coast of Asia and long after Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513 the search for the so-called "Secret of the Strait," the short and direct route to Cathay, was continued. The discovery of the Pacific Ocean, Cortez's conquest of Mexico, De Soto's discovery of the Mississippi River may all be attributed to this effort. As early as 1523, only thirty-one years after the discovery of America, Cortez, while still searching for the strait, was convinced of the desirability and practicability of creating the strait if it did not exist. In 1529, Alvaro de Saaveda Ceron, a cousin of Cortez, had prepared plans for the construction of a canal where Balboa had crossed the isthmus. It is therefore safe to say that the idea of constructing the Panama Canal is almost as old is the discovery of America itself. (It may be of interest to note that a canal at Nicaragua was spoken of at the same time, and the rivalry has continued to the present day.)

In speaking of the difficulties of its construction, the historian Gomara, writing in 1551, says: "There are mountains, but there are also hands. Give me the resolve and the task will be accomplished. If determination is not lacking, means will not fail; the Indies, to which the way is to be made, will furnish them. To a king of Spain, seeking the wealth of Indian commerce, that which is possible is also easy." Phillip II however decided that it would be contrary to the Divine Will to unite two oceans which the Creator of the world had separated, and he decreed that no canal should be constructed. This action was probably due to

the fear of the maritime strength of England, and recalls the recent discussions concerning the participation of that country in the construction and control of the canal. Phillip III of Spain again caused surveys to be made for a canal. In 1701 William Paterson of Scotland, in his book on Central America, speaks of the great benefits to be derived from the building of it.

Alexander von Humboldt, who spent several years in Central America in the beginning of the nineteenth century, spoke of the feasibility and desirability of constructing an artificial waterway between the two oceans. The German poet Goethe, alluding to the canal at Panama, is reported to have said: "So much, however, is certain, that if they succeeded in cutting such a canal that ships of any burden and size can be navigated through it from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean, innumerable benefits will result to the whole human race, civilized and uncivilized. But I should wonder if the United States were to let an opportunity escape of getting such a work into their own hands." He was, indeed, a prophet! When the Central and South American republics came into existence, the construction of the canal claimed their immediate attention, and was the cause of considerable diplomatic activity.

In 1850 the much discussed Clayton-Bulwer treaty was ratified. It provided that neither England nor the United States should exercise exclusive control over any inter-oceanic canal. The wrangling over the interpretation of its provisions commenced before the ink was dry upon its signatures. Secretary Blaine's comment upon it in 1881 is worthy of repetition. He says: "It was misunderstandingly entered into, imperfectly comprehended, contradictorily interpreted, and mutually vexatious."

The treaty was finally abrogated in 1901, but only after strenuous efforts upon the part of the United States, as England was naturally not disposed to give up the advantages her diplomacy had given her.

Meanwhile Ferdinand de Lesseps, inspired by his success at Suez, where he had completed the canal in 1869, turned his attention to the Isthmus of Panama. A French company was formed in 1876, and three years later a congress was called together at Paris to consider all questions concerning the building of the American canal. The Panama route was decided upon and the Universal Interoceanic Canal Company was organized. The following year De Lesseps reported to the company that the plans for a tide-level canal were perfected; that its cost would be $132,000,000, and that it was proposed that its neutrality should be guaranteed by Europe. The American Government was keeping a jealous eye upon all negotiations and proceedings. If the Monroe Doctrine was to be maintained, European control was not to be tolerated. It must be an American canal, on American soil, to be controlled by the American people, regardless of who built it. Inquiry was made of the French Government concerning its attitude. The reply was that it was in no way concerned in the enterprise, and in no way proposed to interfere therein or to give it any support, direct or indirect.

On February 1, 1881, the work was inaugurated with due ceremony. It was to be a great work, and was to be handled upon a magnificent scale. It is startling to read of the purchases that were made and how they were made. Everything was done in an extravagant and showy manner and corruption reigned supreme. After seven years, in 1888, hardly half of the work had been done, the company had spent $400,000,000, and was bankrupt. New companies were organized to save what could be saved from the wreck. The scheme of a tide-level canal was abandoned and the construction of locks decided upon. It was announced that the canal could be and would be completed for an additional $180,000,000, and the work was continued.

While the French company was operating at the isthmus the government of the United States had been negotiating with the Nicaraguan Government in regard to the construction of an inter-oceanic canal on her territory. Before anything was accomplished Grover Cleveland became President of the United States, and in his message withdrawing the treaty from the Senate, he stated that "whatever highway may be constructed across the barrier dividing the two greatest maritime areas of the world, must be removed from the chance of any domination by any single power." This was entirely contradictory to the expressed opinion of his predecessors, who had always contended for "a canal under American control."

The spectacular voyage of the "Oregon" at the outbreak of the Spanish-American war called the nation's attention to the necessity for a shorter waterway between our Atlantic and Pacific Coast States, and the canal question again became an active one in Congress. A commission was appointed to report to Congress upon the matter. It looks almost as though the commission acted under instructions to alarm the French company at Panama. Their first report favored Nicaragua, after rejecting the offer of the Panama Company to sell out its interest for $100,000,000. When, however, the French company, alarmed at the prospect of the Nicaragua Canal, reduced its price to $40,000,000, the commission changed its recommendation, and in June, 1902, Congress accepted the offer of the French company under certain conditions, and a law was passed authorizing the completion of the canal at Panama.

Then came the vexatious negotiations with the United States of Colombia, of which Panama was one of the States. The government of Colombia endeavored to prolong the negotiations until such a time when the concessions to the French company would be forfeited and Colombia would be in a position to possess herself of the purchase price. Treaties were rejected and obstacles put in the way of final adjustment until the State of Panama became alarmed at the action of the central government, fearing that the United States would again turn her attention to Nicaragua. Panama had once been an independent State and, if independent now, could bring the negotiations with the American Government to a quick and satisfactory conclusion. It is a matter of surmise to what extent these ideas were inspired and also the source of the inspiration.

Furthermore, the accidental proximity of the American men-of-war was commented upon at the time. At all events, a revolution took place in November, 1903, and Panama became an independent republic without the necessity of bloodshed. Diplomatic relations were established, and the United States, having acquired the canal zone by treaty, the construction of the canal was taken up, the first commission being appointed in February, 1904.

The State of California had taken a deep interest in all these proceedings. It would mean for her direct water communication with the Eastern States and with Europe; it would mean cheap transportation for passengers and freight; it would tend to make our Pacific Coast ports the distributing points for the entire country west of the Rockies; it would mean trade and manufactories for us, with all the progress that prosperity brings in its train. It was something for San Francisco to celebrate with all the power and glory in her. We are a pleasure-loving city and we desire a chance to show the world how we can celebrate one of the greatest engineering achievements of our times. The canal will stand as a monument to the age we live in, an indication of the restless spirit of progress animating our times; the same spirit that has built our railroads, our great steamships, and is seeking to make aerial navigation possible.

As early as January, 1904, Mr. R. B. Hale, a merchant of San Francisco, writing to the Merchants' Association, urged an International Exposition, stating that "the occasion could be advertised as the opening of San Francisco as the center for the trade of the Pacific Ocean, or in commemoration of the completion of the Panama Canal, or as a centennial celebration of the discovery of the Pacific Ocean in 1513." At that time it was generally believed that the canal would be completed in 1913, four hundred years after the discovery of the Pacific Ocean, thus giving a twofold occasion for celebration. The Merchants' Association became interested at once, and it was decided to call a meeting of the presidents of the various commercial organizations to discuss the matter. Mr. Hale presented his views upon the desirability of holding an exposition to celebrate the completion of the canal, and suggested that San Francisco should declare its intention before some other city claimed this date for a similar purpose. Recent events have proved the wisdom of the suggestion.

The St. Louis Exposition in 1904 and the Portland Exposition in 1905 prevented any great activity in San Francisco, and it was thought wise to study those expositions with a view of learning something concerning the conduct of such an affair and of benefiting by their experiences. In January, 1906, Representative Julius Kahn introduced a bill in Congress favoring an exposition in San Francisco, thus serving formal notice upon the United States of San Francisco's intention. The bill provided for a government commission of nine members appointed by the President and appropriated five million dollars upon condition that a like sum be raised here. It was to be opened in May, 1913, and continue until

January, 1914. An Eastern paper, commenting upon the bill, said: "The historical excuse for this universal exposition is altogether unique in that it concerns a past event and a future one. Primarily the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Pacific by Vasco Nunez de Balboa will be the occasion which the entire world will be asked to celebrate, but incidentally it is hoped that the opening of the Panama Canal will also be commemorated. San Francisco being the chief city of the greatest of oceans and the Panama Canal being comparatively near the heights of Darien, whence Balboa on the 25th day of September, 1513, first looked upon the water of Mar del Sur, renamed the Pacific by Magellan seven years later, the whole thing will fit together nicely — if the canal is completed."

On December 10, 1906, the articles of incorporation of the Pacific Ocean Exposition Company were filed, and a few days later the company met and organized. Nothing, however, could be accomplished at that time in Congress, as the Jamestown Exposition and the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition had the right of way. A bill was introduced in our own State Senate in January, 1907, in behalf of the San Francisco Exposition, which, after some opposition, finally passed both houses, but failed to receive Governor Gillett's approval. Still the company kept up its activity, regular meetings were held during the years 1907, 1908 and 1909, and valuable data were collected. In November, 1909, the company concluded that the time for action had arrived, and it was resolved to call together a ways and means committee of about two hundred citizens in the Merchants Exchange and put the question of organization before them. It was in truth a mass meeting which took place on December 7, 1909, and it was unanimously and enthusiastically resolved to have an exposition at San Francisco in 1915. On December 29, 1909, the Ways and Means Committee met again, and a committee was appointed to name a committee of thirty to take charge. This was done, and on March 22, 1910, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company was incorporated, with these thirty as directors.

Things were not destined to run smoothly. San Diego had also been agitating the question of an exposition, and claimed a superior right to celebrate the opening of the canal because hers was the nearest Pacific Coast port of the United States. It was the first on the way north from the canal. Conferences were held and some weeks later a convention was called to meet at Santa Barbara. This convention was a representative body from almost every part of the State except San Diego. After some discussion San Francisco was endorsed unanimously.

The exposition company proceeded on its way, and arrangements were made for stock subscriptions. Preliminary soliciting had to be done and popular enthusiasm had to be aroused. The directors were splendidly supported by the public and on April 29, 1910, a mass meeting was called for the purpose of receiving and announcing subscriptions publicly. It was a wonderful success. The list was headed by forty different people announcing their subscription of $25,000 each, and the

first million was obtained as fast as it could be announced and written on the board. At the end of two hours over $4,000,000 had been subscribed, and it was not "stage money" either.

It now became important that San Francisco should be represented in Washington before the adjournment of Congress for the summer. A delegation headed by Governor Gillett was sent on. The San Diego representatives were also on the ground to present their claims for recognition. An agreement was finally reached to the effect that the entire California delegation in Congress should favor and do all in its power to pass a resolution inviting all the nations of the world to participate in a fair to be held in San Francisco in 1915, and thereafter the delegation would favor and do all in its power to pass a resolution inviting the Republic of Mexico and the nations of Central and South America to participate in an exposition to be held in the year 1915 in the city of San Diego.

This agreement disposed of the active opposition of San Diego and united the Congressional delegation of California. But a new and vigorous opponent for exposition honors had come into the field. New Orleans demanded to be designated the Exposition City for 1915. She had an almost solid southern support and considerable assistance from the Mississippi Valley. Congress adjourned without taking any action, and the whole matter was postponed to the next session to convene in December, 1910.

Further action was now necessary in California, and Governor Gillett called an extra session of the Legislature to convene in September to consider bills in behalf of the exposition at San Francisco. The session was a short one and but little opposition developed. A constitutional amendment providing for a State tax of $5,000,000 was passed, to be submitted to the people, and San Francisco was authorized to submit an amendment to her charter providing for a bond issue of $5,000,000. Both propositions carried at the election in November by enormous majorities.

Thus armed with a State subscription, a municipal subscription, and private subscriptions, amounting in all to over $15,000,000, another committee was sent to Washington in December to obtain national recognition. It was New Orleans or San Francisco, with our opponents in the lead from the start. Months of hard work and much oratory, logical argument and pure sentiment, personal friendships and influences, all were brought to bear to make our campaign successful.

On January 31st Congress finally passed the resolution authorizing the President, when certain conditions had been complied with, to invite the world to the exposition at San Francisco. The first condition of the Congressional resolution was that the necessary money should be available. This had been practically complied with before the resolution was passed. The other condition was that the President should be satisfied with the site chosen.

Where shall we put the exposition? In the Park, at Bay View, Harbor View, Lake Merced?

Of these the most easily obtainable is the Park site; the prettiest is the Lake Merced site; for trans-bay visitors Harbor View is the handiest, offering also as it does, the magnificent view of the bay from the Golden Gate, past the Marin hills to Berkeley. It would take days to present the arguments advanced by the proponents of each one in favor of their choice, and I will spare you even the shortest review of them. Suffice it to say that the task of selection is a difficult one. Engineers, architects, railroadmen, pilots, and lawyers have been called in consultation to present the advantages and disadvantages of each site from their professional point of view. Professor McAdie of the Weather Bureau was called upon to give the directors the benefit of his observations concerning the climatic conditions at the various sites and he was asked to supply data, if possible, of wind and fog. The cost of preparing the grounds had to be figured upon, the amount of space required had to be considered. The foundations for the many buildings, the water supply, the drainage, presented problems for solution. As this is an exposition to celebrate the opening of a great waterway, what part was the bay to have in the celebration and to what extent was it to be a maritime affair?

Meanwhile the main issue, the Exposition itself, has not been lost sight of for one moment. What is it going to be? The biggest thing that ever was, but how to make it so? Suggestions upon this point are valuable. What is going to be the great underlying idea of the event? Is it manufacture, is it trade, is it agriculture, is it art, is it science, is it navigation? Navigation, properly exploited, will include them all. It will include the oceans and the ships sailing on them, the cargo the ship carries, the ports she visits and the countries back of them. It includes Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and America, without forgetting the North and South Poles. All will be asked to contribute.

Conventions and congresses—literary, scientific, historical, etc.—will be invited to assemble here in 1915 for their deliberations. Naval displays, Olympic games, athletic sports will find their places. It might be a matter of interest to speculate upon the possible advances to be made in aerial navigation and a regularly established line of airships between the inn on top of Mount Tamalpais and the exposition grounds may afford some variety to our visitors, and no doubt to ourselves as well. All concessions must be considered and rules adopted to provide for their control. Heat, light and power offer some interesting problems to the heads of the various departments. The task is stupendous. San Francisco will be able to accomplish it all, but proper organization is necessary. Officers and committees must find their proper spheres and work harmoniously in order to work effectively. The relation between the board of directors and its chiefs of departments must be established. An elastic scheme of organization has been adopted, which will be tried out and changed as may be required. Conferences and meetings innumerable are necessary to bring order out of this seeming chaos.

An interesting compilation has been made of the amount of money

expended in the establishment of the various expositions held since 1850, the cost of maintenance, and the relation these two have borne to the actual gate receipts. Accepting the experience of previous expositions, the $17,500,000 which has been subscribed for the Panama-Pacific Exposition ought to finance it readily.

After the matter of site has been satisfactorily settled, the architectural end will probably become of paramount importance. Will the buildings be scattered over a large acreage, as in St. Louis, or will it be planned upon a more compact basis? It is to be hoped that our buildings will not be mere reproductions of Greek temples or of more or less well-known European buildings, but that some effort will be made to give expression to the originality and imagination of our own people. There should be an opportunity to show what development we have reached and let our architects, sculptors and painters show themselves in their work. Comparisons will be made, for foreign countries are sure to bring their plans and put up their own buildings, naturally under certain regulations that will keep all in some harmony, but above all there will be an opportunity for California to show that not only in climate and in soil, but also in the spirit and in the genius of her people, she is a rival of Italy in the time of her greatness and her glory.

Much has been thought and said concerning the probable effect of the exposition upon the future of San Francisco. We are not like the cities of the East nor of the Middle West nor of the South. The Pacific Coast seems to be developing a type entirely its own, which finds its greatest expression in this city. When we go East we are recognized as Coast people—the Californian has a bearing peculiar to himself. The Easterner acquires it when he has been assimilated. It would be unfair to call us provincial, as we are too cosmopolitan for that, but will the exposition help us to become metropolitan—a city of the world? An influx of people from all over the world is expected; a great many will remain and will no doubt have their influence upon us; the canal will bring us into closer proximity with Occidental Europe; there will be new enterprises and renewed activities. San Francisco ought to escape the reaction usually following an exposition, as the benefits of the canal itself remain with us, and we ought to be prepared to exploit them to the utmost. The Californian has demonstrated his ability to rise from defeat and do battle with renewed strength and vigor, which surely demonstrates his ability to take advantage of all opportunities that may be offered.

But let us not forget that though it is a Californian Exposition, from which the Pacific Coast will derive the most immediate benefit, it is American and international, and the world is invited to display its progress by the United States of America.

Arisen

Arisen! Arisen! Triumphant o'er Fate,
Thy splendor renewed at the sea's Golden Gate.
Hail, brave San Francisco, thou bravest and best,
March on to thy glory in front of the West.
We wept at thy sorrow and ever we pray,
God guide thy tomorrow, God bless thee today.
And praying we pledge thee united to be,
To keep thee the Queen of the Earth's greatest sea.

James Henry MacLafferty